Synopsis of *Woody Guthrie: His Life and His Songs*

This Display Division exhibit tells the story of American folk musician Woody Guthrie's life and illustrates some of his song lyrics with stamps, covers, postal stationery, and other philatelic material, enhanced by various non-philatelic material.

Exhibit history. From the time it was first shown at Sandical in 1993, this exhibit confounded philatelic judges. It seemed to tell a thematic story, but it didn't conform to the rules of thematic exhibiting. In the ensuing nine years, some juries saw it as a thematic exhibit, while others saw it as a special study. During that time, it won every level of medal from bronze to gold at national shows. Mostly, however, it won silvers and vermeils. Among its many special awards were eight ATA medals, sometimes from juries who said they had judged it as a special study. The exhibit has the strange honor of having won the Lefebre Award for the best *non-thematic* exhibit by an RPA member at ROPEX 1997 and the Gubler Award for the best *thematic* exhibit by an RPA member at ROPEX 1999! Since being reorganized as a Display Division exhibit in 2002, it has won three vermeils and six golds at national shows. It also received a Court of Honor gold award at OKPEX 2010 and the multi-frame Reserve Grand at Ameristamp Expo 2013.

Status of material. All the philatelic items are originals, of course, although a few items are accompanied by photocopies of the other side in whole or in part. All of the non-philatelic items are the genuine articles, with the exception of one reproduction of Woody Guthrie drawing of himself with his second wife. The original pen-and-ink drawing is in the Woody Guthrie Archives and is not for sale. Also, the **THIS MACHINE KILLS FASCISTS** sticker is a modern recreation sold by Woody Guthrie Publications. On the other hand, all pictures that were published in books were actually clipped from those books. They are not photocopies or scans.

Philatelic variety. This is the exhibit's area of strength. Along with what one would normally expect from the Postal Division are such esoteric items as a New York Foreign Mail star cancellation, a Port Townsend kicking mule cancellation, a cover to an American soldier in the Philippines postmarked on Pearl Harbor Day, a letter-sheet to an American POW in Germany postmarked on the day Germany surrendered, a German stamp used on cover with Hitler's head obliterated by Soviet occupation forces, two air mail crash covers, a railway fire cover, a flood cover, a Wells Fargo & Company frank, and a US 1875 special printing with **SPECIMEN** overprint. Yes, there is a proof in the exhibit, and an imperf error pair. There is even one CTO shown for the sake of philatelic variety!

The exhibit also includes a large variety of philatelic material from the Revenue Division, the Illustrated Mail Division, the Cinderella Division, and the Post Card Division.

But why so much US material? Because Woody Gutrie's story is essentially an American story, and it is best told with material from the United States. Nevertheless, the exhibit contains philatelic material from more than two dozen other countries as well.

Variety of non-philatelic items. Among the many items included are photographs, a phonograph record, book covers, pages from song books, newspaper clippings, British wartime rail travel coupons, a New York City taxi driver's license, a US wartime Mileage Rationing Record, a US Maritime Service patch, Port of New York Authority toll scrip, a New York Transit Authority subway token, and a US Silver Certificate.

Note regarding autographs. All autographs were either obtained from the person directly or were purchased from reputable dealers and compared with known examples.

WOODY GUTHRIE BIOGRAPHIES:

Cray, Ed. *Ramblin' Man, the Life and Times of Woody Guthrie*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2004.

Klein, Joe. *Woody Guthrie, a Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1980.

Partridge, Elizabeth. *This Land Was Made for You and Me*. New York: Viking, 2002.

MUSICAL NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated in write-ups, all song lyrics are by Woody Guthrie or are Woody Guthrie's versions of traditional folk songs. Woody sometimes composed original tunes, but more often adapted existing melodies for his songs.

PHILATELIC NOTE: Basic letter and post card rates (surface or air mail) are generally not indicated, nor are philatelic overpayments. Multiple rates and fees for special services generally are indicated when they can be determined.